

# Will the War for the Croatian Homeland War Veterans Ever End?

Davor Rak<sup>1</sup>, Aldenita Matić<sup>1</sup> and Benedict Rak<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Zagreb, University Hospital Dubrava, Department of Psychiatry, Referral Centre for Stress Related Disorders of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republic of Croatia, Zagreb, Croatia

<sup>2</sup> University of Zagreb, University Hospital Dubrava, Zagreb, Croatia

## ABSTRACT

*The aim of this paper is to show the psychological consequences of participation in the Homeland War and experienced trauma which can indirectly be seen through drawing even after more than 15 years after the war had ended. The research was conducted on a sample of 125 patients of both genders treated in the Daily Hospital program of University Hospital Dubrava, Psychiatry Clinics. All the tested had trauma in their medical history and all of them met the PTSD diagnostic criteria, 75 examinees participated in the Homeland War and they represent the veteran group, and 50 examinees went through a stressful situation during peacetime and they represent the civilian group. All the examinees had to make two individual drawings, and the task was to portray feelings of term »love« (first drawing) and term »hate« (second drawing). They could choose motifs and colors freely. When portraying the term love, choice of motifs between the civilian and the veteran group wasn't considerably different, and only a small number of male veteran population (6.6%) drawings hinted at the connection with the Homeland War. The results between two groups are completely different in portraying the term hate. As much as 76% examinees from the veteran group have unequivocally and directly decided to portray wartime motifs, unlike the civilian group whose use of wartime motifs was just 10%. When choosing color, nearly 90% of the veteran group used neutral and cool colors to portray the term hate.*

**Key words:** Homeland War, war veterans, trauma, PTSD, love and hate portray

## Introduction

*Significance of drawing in the development of humans both as individuals and a community as a whole.*

One can safely say that man shapes since the beginning. Shaping is older than drawing, and drawing predates writing, and it is believed that it is older than articulating one's mind with speech. Drawing is exclusively a human activity, it serves as means of communication, it supplements speech and writing, it provides all of the above with a special, wider and more free-form dimension than writing in the sense that it encompasses wider forms of expression. Drawing and painting is the shortest path from the idea to its visibility.

In the light of importance of drawing to the evolution of human civilization and the society in general, the teachings of Jung where he talks about archetypal symbols of primitive forms from the collective heritage<sup>1</sup>. His

torically speaking, visual expression emerged as the earliest communication system used by individuals to create their personal and general messages using symbols and signs. In his interpretation of symbol dictionary, Jung divides them into three groups:

- universal symbols which the basis of Jung's archetypes, they are unchangeable and always the same
- local symbols which are changeable is certain environments in terms of mentality of a certain group
- individual symbols which correlate to characteristics of individuals and are created and disappear as such with the duration of the individual himself<sup>2</sup>

*Historical overview of the role of the drawing in visual psychopathology*

At the beginning of this overview one should emphasize that there is widely held misbelief among non-pro-

professionals about meaning of drawings connected to mental illness where mental patients' drawing were considered borderline genius or reflecting some other special properties. That misbelieve is connected to the psychiatrist Lombroso who, in his book, »Genius and Madness« (1864) connects mental disorder and artistic activities in a way that one could conclude that lunacy is a special gift and as such contributes to better grade artistic shaping<sup>3</sup>.

First work connecting drawings of mentally disturbed to their illness was done by A. Tardieu<sup>4</sup> (1872) and M. Simon<sup>5</sup>, but that doesn't represent real scientific contribution. The first scientific approach was done by Reja (1907) who drawings of mentally ill to be art in its embryo form lacking intention to create<sup>6</sup>, which can easily be understood in relation to known facts of children art expression.

The most important turning point in understanding drawings of the mentally ill came with H. Prinzhorn's major work »Bildneri des Geisteskranken«<sup>7</sup> (1922). In it, the other differentiates the term shaping from the term art. Drawings represent alienation from reality and presuppose emotional detachment and they reveal plethora of unconscious elements and that is the basic premise resting on the prism of psychological – psychoanalytic seeds stemming from the teachings of Krepelin and Bleuler. These teachings put the focus on the patient instead of the patient's world perspective. Paneth introduces painting to the therapy of his patients, so, he involves the in a therapeutic aspect, not only diagnostic or just observational one, which was the case until then<sup>8</sup>.

The interest in such matters in Croatia starts in the 60's of the last century, the Clinical Hospital Sisters of Mercy was the institution which dealt which such matters: between 1960 and 1969 9000 drawing had been collected and Prof. B. Pražić MD, PhD, in his case study »The Drawing as a diagnostic contribution in psychiatry« processed certain categories of mentally ill and attempted to lay down the basics of diagnostic and prognostic criteria<sup>9</sup>. Said author spent his entire working life studying artistic shaping of the mentally ill and can be considered a pioneer in that field of our country. In 1981 he founded the Association of Art Therapists in Zagreb. Our psychiatry ward has been conducting patient drawing and painting and efforts were made to individually interpret their work within the overall psychopathology of an individual.

A drawing of the mentally ill is a result of a spontaneous pulsion, there is always an archetypal significance invested. The mentally ill creates like a child, when he paints he does so with an array of emotional manifestations, enthused, involuntary and delighted. Creativity is a prehistoric human need and it gains importance with early beginnings of culture (according to anthropological definition).

### *Evolution of the drawing as a diagnostic and therapeutic contribution*

The importance of a drawing as a diagnostic contribution in psychiatry was probably best articulated by B.

Pražić: »If a therapist can connect expressive elements in patient's work with the dynamics of his mental disorders and interpret them in its entirety, the diagnostic aspect of that work is achieved«<sup>10</sup>. A drawing is a diagnostic aide, not a key. Artistic expression through painting and drawing contributes to understanding the ethiology of mental illness or disorder. The analysis is conducted using abundance of drawer's data. Representatives of individual drawing analysis were: Karen Machover, psychologist, who developed a method of personality analysis based upon the interpretation of drawing of a human figure<sup>11</sup>. Hermann Rorschach, Swiss psychiatrist, developed a projective test based upon interpretation of ink-blots<sup>12</sup>. Charles Koch, Swiss psychiatrist, author of the Baum test, a projective test used as a personality analysis method and emotional history of an individual<sup>13</sup>. Analysis of a group drawing was done by George Vassiliu, systemic and family therapist, who developed transactional test of group drawing therapy<sup>14</sup>, Neda Bučan, Croatian psychiatrist, family therapist, did family drawing analysis and Dubravka Kocijan-Hercigonja, Davor Rak and assistants who used drawings in group therapy diagnostics<sup>15</sup>.

### *Trauma and Consequences*

Trauma is a unique experience tied to a certain event or permanent condition where the person's ability to integrate the affective experience obstructed by life or personal integrity threat. The posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is defined as a clinical entity in the third edition of The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association<sup>16</sup>. *Conditio sine qua non* for PTSD is the experience of immediate life threat or a life of a close person. Characteristics of this disorder are the reliving of traumatic event, trying to avoid trauma reminders and constant heightened agitation. Yan Xiaodan and associates showed in their study<sup>17</sup> that there is higher »resting« brain activity in the activity (responsible for fear processing and anxious emotions), ventral anterior cingulate cortex, insula (the part of the brain that regulates sensitivity to pain and negative emotions) and orbital frontal cortex. With all of the above, Ben Shephard points out, that one cannot, among other thing, rule out political context, how the issue of war veterans' pensions connected to psychoneurosis was solved, how was the family support, whether the veteran lobby was strong, what was the media influence, whether the rehabilitation was conducted<sup>18</sup>.

## **Materials and Methods**

### *Aim*

To determine if there is a difference in the expressive understanding of the abstract terms of love and hate in the patient group being treated for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) connected to the participation in the Homeland War (veterans) in relation to other group con-

sisted of patients being treated for PTSD not related to the participation in the Homeland War (civilians).

### Hypothesis

Choice of motifs representing love should not be considerably different between the civilian and the veteran group, while the choice of motifs and colors representing hate is expected to be considerably different due to long and intensive exposure to trauma during the participation in war within the veterans group, which evidently led to »constrained« negative emotions which can easily be summoned to conscious and behavioral), although the war ended more than 15 years ago.

### Sample

Sample was made up of 125 patients of both genders treating (treated) through the Daily Hospital Program of Dubrava University Hospital, Psychiatry Clinics over the period of six months during 2009. All of the examinees met the PTSD diagnostic criteria (interview, psychological testing). The veteran patient group consisted of 67 males and 8 females. The civilian group of patients had 15 males and 35 females.

### Methodology

The examinees made two drawings of their own choice: one had a theme of love and the other the theme of hate, the motifs where free choice including the option of choosing the color. Time to do the drawings was not limited, and the drawings were made on the A4 sheet size.

### Results

Drawings of love motifs (Table 1) are not considerably different within both examined groups, 21 subjects (28%) in the veteran group chose the motif of family/children, the abstract heart motif 13 (17.3%), and 8 (10.7%) subjects chose scenery. The civilian group predominantly used family/children to portray love, 13 (26%), 12 (24%)

chose the abstract heart, and 11 (22%) drew scenery. Only in five (6.6%) of male veteran population motifs connected with the participation in the Homeland War occur.

Hate motifs drawings (Table 2) show considerable variations in motif choice: 17 (22.6%) individuals in the veteran group chose an image of a Chetnik, 15 (20%) drew a battlefield with a tank and 11 (14.6%) drew weapons. In total, 57 veterans associate the term hate with war. The most common motif of hate in the civilian group was a thunderstorm, 16 (32%) individuals. 9 (18%) individuals drew a man beating a woman, while four (8%) drew trees.

Choice of colors in drawing motifs of love (Table 3x). 33 (44%) used warm colors, 16 (21.3%) used cool colors and 26 (34.7%) used neutral colors. When drawing motifs connected with love, civilians used warm colors in 32 drawings (64%), cool colors in 4 (8%) and neutral colors in 14 drawings (28%).

Choice of colors in drawing motifs of hate (Table 4). When drawing motifs of hate, veterans predominantly used neutral colors, 49 (65%) of them. 18 (24%) used cool colors, and 8 (10%) used warm colors. 27 (54%) individuals in the civilian group used neutral colors to draw the term hate, 12 (24%) used cool colors and 11 (20%) used warm colors.

### Discussion

When choosing motifs which portray the term love there were no considerable differences between two tested groups, especially when choosing the first three motifs. The motifs overlap in seven instances, while the veteran group displays nine motifs civilians didn't use, but in smaller number of occurrence. Chosen motifs are ones of closeness and warmth which generally evoke positive associations representing security, beauty of nature, happiness and love in the broadest sense of those terms. As males dominated in the veteran group, we didn't inter-

TABLE 1  
MOTIFS OF LOVE IN DRAWINGS

Motif	Love		Motif	Civilians	
	Veterans			M	F
1. Family/children	19	2	1. Family/children	6	7
2. Heart (abstract)	12	1	2. Heart (abstract)	4	8
3. Scenery	7	1	3. Scenery	2	9
4. Sun	4	4	4. Flower/flowers	1	7
5. Flower/flowers	7	0	5. Sun	2	4
6. Domestic idyll	3	0	N=50	15	35
7. Tree	4	0			
8. Other: map of Croatia, rosary (2), clenched fists, circle (2), karate man, domestic animals (2), written text (2)	11	0			
N=75	67	8			

**TABLE 2**  
MOTIFS OF HATE IN DRAWINGS

Hate					
Veterans			Civilians		
Motif	M	F	Motif	M	F
1. Chetnik	15	2	1. Storm + rain	4	12
2. Battlefield + tank	15	0	2. Man beating woman	2	7
3. Weapon (knife, rifle, pistol)	11	0	3. Trees	2	2
4. Storm + rain	7	3	4. Bombarding	3	0
5. Bombarding	6	2	5. Rifle	1	2
6. JNA soldier (star)	4	0	6. Chetnik	2	0
7. Man beating woman	1	1	7. Fire	0	2
8. Other: killed cattle, map of SFRJ, grave, word »pain«, word »I don't know«, snake, circle, five-pointed star	8	0	8. Quarrel	1	2
N=75	67	8	9. Object depicting work institution	0	2
			10. Other: broken heart, hung Serb, sick pig, cigarette, blue sun, written note,	0	6
			N=50	15	35

**TABLE 3**  
CHOICE OF COLOURS IN DRAWING MOTIFS OF LOVE

Colours	Veterans	Veterans	Civilians	Civilians
red		14		16
yellow	warm colours	9	warm colours	2
orange	33	4	32	2
combination		6		12
blue		8		3
green	cool colours	2	cool colours	0
violet	16	0	4	0
combination		6		1
black	neutral colours	1	neutral colours	12
grey	26	4	14	2
brown		21		0
	N=75		N=50	
Total: N=125				

**TABLE 4**  
CHOICE OF COLOURS IN DRAWING MOTIFS OF HATE

Colours	Veterans	Veterans	Civilians	Civilians
red		2		4
yellow	warm colours	2	warm colours	2
orange	8	1	11	1
combination		3		4
blue		12		9
green	cool colours	2	cool colours	0
violet	18	0	12	0
combination		4		3
black	neutral colours	1	neutral colours	6
grey	49	36	27	19
brown		12		2
	N=75		N=50	
Total: N=125				

pret gender differences. Both groups dominantly used warm colors to portray love (veterans 44%, civilians 64%), while the use of cool and neutral colors prevails in the veteran group. The results of the analysis of motifs for hate considerably differ then the ones chosen for love. The difference is in the choice of hate motifs as well as the frequency those motifs were used. Motifs associated with term hate in the veteran group were predominantly related to war, that is, 10 out of 15 hate motifs were war associated. Frequency of war motifs within hate motifs is 57 (76%) in veteran group. In the civilian group motifs for the term hate, beside thunderstorm and rain, are associated with family violence, and workplace mobbing. The choice of motifs for the term hate is associated with something bad, painful, pessimistic, cold, repulsive. When

choosing colors for the hate motif, neutral colors dominate in both examined groups: in veteran group more than 65% and in civilian group more than 50% of the individuals. When analyzing the term hate, neutral colors prevail within both examined groups (veterans 65.3%, civilians 54%), cool colors are behind (veterans and civilians 24%), and warm colors were least used (veterans 10.7%, civilians 22%).

### Conclusion

Despite the fact that the war ended more than 15 years ago, the Homeland War veterans' negative repercussions brought by long and intensive exposure to war

trauma have been revealed indirectly, through drawings, where 76% veterans chose content directly and undoubtedly connected to war to portray hate, where neutral and cool colors dominated (89.3%). Drawings portraying the term love have virtually no difference in the choice of

motifs between the veteran and the civilian group, warm colors were dominantly used (civilians 64%, veterans 44%), and only 6.6% veterans hint at the connection with wartime events.

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A. Matic

University of Zagreb, University Hospital Dubrava, Department of Psychiatry, Referral Centre for Stress Related Disorders of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republic of Croatia, Av. Gojka Šuška 6, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia  
e-mail: aldenita.matic@gmail.com

## HOĆE LI RAT IKADA ZAVRŠITI ZA BRANITELJE DOMOVINSKOG RATA?

### SAŽETAK

Cilj ovog rada bio je prikazati psihičke posljedice sudjelovanja u Domovinskom ratu i proživljenih trauma koje se mogu indirektno vidjeti kroz crtež i nakon više od 15 godina od završetka rata. Ispitivanje se provodilo na uzorku od 125 pacijenata oba spola koji su liječeni u Dnevnoj bolnici Klinike za psihijatriju Kliničke bolnice Dubrava, Referentnog centra Ministarstva zdravlja za poremećaje uzrokovane stresom, Regionalnog centra za psihotraumu. Svi ispitanici u anamnezi imali su traumu i svi su zadovoljavali dijagnostičke kriterije za Posttraumatski stresni poremećaj (PTSP), 75 ispitanika sudjelovalo je u Domovinskom ratu i predstavljaju skupinu branitelja, a 50 ispitanika stresnu situaciju su doživjeli u mirnodobsko vrijeme i predstavljaju skupinu civila. Svi ispitanici trebali su izraditi dva individualna crteža, a zadatak je bio da prikažu što za njih predstavljaju osjećaji ljubavi (prvi crtež) i mržnje (drugi crtež). Motive i boje mogli su birati slobodno. U predstavljanju pojma ljubavi izbor izabranih motiva između skupine civila i branitelja nije se značajno razlikovao, a tek u malom broju muške braniteljske populacije (6,6%) moglo se naslutiti da motivi imaju dodirnih točaka sa Domovinskim ratom. Potpuno drugačiji rezultat dobije se između dvije ispitivane skupine kada je u pitanju prikazivanje pojma mržnje. U čak 76% ispitanika iz braniteljske skupine odlučili su se direktno i nedvojbeno prikazati ratne motive, nasuprot skupine civila koja se za ratne motive odlučila u samo 10%. Kada je u pitanju izbor boja u gotovo 90% u braniteljskoj skupini su korištene neutralne i hladne boje za prikaz pojma mržnje.